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General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-sixth session

90th plenary meeting
Friday, 21 December 2001, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Reports of the Second Committee

The President: The General Assembly will consider the reports of the Second Committee on agenda items 95 to 107 and 12. I request the Rapporteur of the Second Committee, Ms. Jana Simonová of the Czech Republic, to introduce the reports of the Second Committee in one intervention.

Ms. Simonová (Czech Republic), Rapporteur of the Second Committee: I have the honour to present for the Assembly's consideration the following reports of the Second Committee on the agenda items allocated to it by the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session.

Under agenda item 12, entitled "Report of the Economic and Social Council", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 23 of document A/56/571, the adoption of three draft resolutions and, in paragraph 24, the adoption of three draft decisions.

Agenda item 95 is entitled "Macroeconomic policy questions". Under sub-item (a), "Trade and development", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 18 of document A/56/558/Add.1, the adoption of three draft resolutions.

Under sub-item (b), entitled "International financial system and development", the Second Committee, in paragraph 6 of document A/56/558/Add.2, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under sub-item (c), entitled "Science and technology for development", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 12 of document A/56/558/Add.3, the adoption of two draft resolutions.

Under sub-item (d), entitled "External debt crisis and development", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 6 of document A/56/558/Add.4, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under agenda item 96, entitled "Sectoral policy questions", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 16 of document A/56/559, the adoption of three draft resolutions.

Agenda item 97 is entitled "Sustainable development and international economic cooperation". Under sub-item (a), entitled "Women in development", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 6 of document A/56/560/Add.1, the adoption of one draft resolution. Members should note that the report refers to "women and development", whereas it should read "women in development".

Under sub-item (b), entitled "Human resources development", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 6 of document A/56/560/Add.2, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under sub-item (c), entitled "High-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 7 of document A/56/560/Add.3, the adoption of one draft resolution and, in paragraph 8, the adoption of one draft decision.

Under sub-item (d), entitled "Implementation of the commitments and policies agreed upon in the

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Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, and implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 5 of document A/56/560/Add.4, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under agenda item 97, entitled "Sustainable development and international economic cooperation", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 3 of document A/56/560/Add.5, the adoption of one draft decision.

Agenda item 98 is entitled "Environment and sustainable development". Under sub-item (a), entitled "Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 10 of document A/56/561/Add.1, the adoption of one draft resolution and, in paragraph 11, the adoption of one draft decision. With regard to this document, I would like to point out that the United States made a statement before the adoption of the draft resolution and that the text of paragraph 7 of the report should therefore be corrected by inserting the name of the United States of America before that of Belgium.

Under sub-item (b), entitled "International strategy for disaster reduction", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 10 of document A/56/561/Add.2, the adoption of two draft resolutions.

Under sub-item (c), entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 9 of document A/56/561/Add.3, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under sub-item (d), entitled "Convention on Biological Diversity", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 6 of document A/56/561/Add.4, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under sub-item (e), entitled "Further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 6 of document A/56/561/Add.5, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under sub-item (f), entitled "Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 9 of document A/56/561/Add.6, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under sub-item (g), entitled "Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy, including the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 6 of document A/56/561/Add.7, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under agenda item 98, entitled "Environment and sustainable development, the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 12 of document A/56/561/Add.8, the adoption of two draft resolutions and, in paragraph 13, the adoption of one draft decision.

Agenda item 99 is entitled "Operational activities for development". Under sub-item (a), entitled "Triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 6 of document A/56/562/Add.1, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under sub-item (b), entitled "Economic and technical cooperation among developing countries", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 11 of document A/56/562/Add.2, the adoption of one draft resolution and, in paragraph 12, the adoption of one draft decision.

Under agenda item 100, entitled "International migration and development, including the question of the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development to address migration issues", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 9 of document A/56/563, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under agenda item 101, entitled "Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 10 of document A/56/564, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under agenda item 102, entitled "Implementation of the Habitat Agenda and outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on this topic", the

Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 16 of document A/56/565, the adoption of two draft resolutions.

Under agenda item 103, entitled "Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 10 of document A/56/566, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under agenda item 104, entitled "Training and research", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 11 of document A/56/567, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under agenda item 105, entitled "Globalization and interdependence", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 9 of document A/56/568, the adoption of one draft resolution.

Under agenda item 106, entitled "Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 12 of document A/56/569, the adoption of one draft resolution and, in paragraph 13, the adoption of one draft decision.

Under agenda item 107, entitled "High-level international intergovernmental consideration of financing for development", the Second Committee recommends, in paragraph 14 of document A/56/570, the adoption of one draft resolution and, in paragraph 15, the adoption of two draft decisions.

Before I conclude, may I take this opportunity to thank most sincerely our Chairman, Mr. Francisco Seixas da Costa, Permanent Representative of Portugal, for his excellent leadership, as well as the Vice Chairman, Mr. Garfield Barnwell of Guyana; Mr. Dharmansjah Djumala of Indonesia; and Mr. Felix Mbayu of Cameroon for their extraordinary collaboration and partnership during this most successful Second Committee.

On behalf of the Bureau, let me express our high appreciation to all facilitators and delegations who actively participated in negotiations and contributed to the efficient and timely completion of the work of the Second Committee.

Finally, may I also thank the Secretariat, particularly Ms. Peggy Kelley and her team, but also all others who provided their outstanding assistance to me and all other members of the Bureau.

The President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Second Committee which are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

Statements will therefore be limited to explanation of vote.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Second Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, that is, either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Second Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Second Committee. This means that where recorded votes were taken, we will do the same, unless the Secretariat has been notified otherwise in advance.

I should also hope that we may proceed to adopt without a vote the recommendations that were adopted without a vote in the Second Committee.

Agenda item 95

Macroeconomic policy questions

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/558)

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to take note of the report of the Second Committee contained in document A/56/558?

It was so decided.

(a) Trade and development

Report of the Second Committee
(A/56/558/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly will take a decision on the three draft resolutions recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 18 of its report.

The Assembly will turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "International trade and development".

The Second Committee adopted draft resolution I. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 56/178).

The President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia

Against:

United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Draft resolution II was adopted by 100 votes to 1, with 46 abstentions (resolution 56/179).

The President: Draft resolution III is entitled "Specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries".

The Second Committee adopted draft resolution III. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution III was adopted (resolution 56/180).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 95?

It was so decided.

(b) International financial system and development

Report of the Second Committee
(A/56/558/Add.2)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The draft resolution is entitled, "Towards a strengthened and stable international financial architecture responsive to the priorities of growth and development, especially in developing countries, and to the promotion of economic and social equity".

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/181).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 95?

It was so decided.

(c) **Science and technology for development**

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/558/Add.3)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the two draft resolutions recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 12 of its report.

The Assembly will turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "Science and technology for development".

The Second Committee adopted draft resolution I. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 56/182).

The President: Draft resolution II is entitled "World Summit on the Information Society".

The Second Committee adopted draft resolution II. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 56/183).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 95?

It was so decided.

(d) **External debt crisis and development**

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/558/Add.4)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The draft resolution is entitled "Enhancing international cooperation towards a durable solution to the external debt problems of developing countries".

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/184).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 95?

It was so decided.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 95 as a whole.

Agenda item 96

Sectoral policy questions

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/559).

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the three draft resolutions recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 16 of its report.

We turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "Business and development".

The Second Committee adopted draft resolution I. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 56/185).

The President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Preventing and combating corrupt practices and transfer of funds of illicit origin and returning such funds to the countries of origin".

The Second Committee adopted draft resolution II. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 56/186).

The President: Draft resolution III is entitled "Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa, (1993-2002)".

The Second Committee adopted draft resolution III. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution III was adopted (resolution 56/187).

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 96.

Agenda item 97

Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

Reports of the Second Committee (A/56/560 and Add.5)

The President: We turn first to the report of the Second Committee contained in document A/56/560.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to take note of the report of the Second Committee contained in document A/56/560?

It was so decided.

The President: We now turn to the draft decision recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 3 of its report contained in document A/56/560/Add.5.

The draft decision is entitled "Report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/172".

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 97.

Agenda item 97 (*continued*)

(a) Women in development

Report of the Second Committee
(A/56/560/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/188).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 97?

It was so decided.

(b) Human resources development

Report of the Second Committee
(A/56/560/Add.2)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/189).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 97?

It was so decided.

(c) High-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership

Report of the Second Committee
(A/56/560/Add.3)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 7 of its report, and on the draft decision recommended by the Committee in paragraph 8 of the same report.

We turn first to the draft resolution, entitled "High-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership". The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/190).

The President: We now turn to the draft decision, entitled "Summary by the President of the General Assembly of the high-level dialogue on the theme 'Responding to globalization: facilitating the integration of developing countries into the world economy in the twenty-first century'".

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt the decision?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 97?

It was so decided.

(d) Implementation of the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, and implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade

Report of the Second Committee (A/54/560/Add.4)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 5 of its report.

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution, entitled "Implementation of the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, and implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade". May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/191).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 97?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 97 as a whole.

Agenda item 98

Environment and sustainable development

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/561 and Add.8)

The President: We turn first to the report of the Second Committee contained in document A/56/561.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to take note of the report of the Second Committee contained in document A/56/561?

It was so decided.

The President: We now turn to the two draft resolutions recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 12 of its report contained in document A/56/561/Add.8, and to the draft decision recommended by the Committee in paragraph 13 of the same report.

The Second Committee adopted draft resolution I, entitled "Status of preparations for the International Year of Freshwater, 2003". May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 56/192).

The President: The Second Committee adopted draft resolution II, entitled "Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its twenty-first session". May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 56/193).

The President: We next turn to the draft decision, entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on products harmful to health and the environment".

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 98.

Agenda item 98 (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21

Report of the Second Committee
(A/56/561/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 10 of its report and a draft decision recommended by the Committee in paragraph 11 of the same report.

I should like to inform members that action on the draft resolution is postponed to allow time for the review of its programme budget implications by the Fifth Committee. The Assembly will take action on the draft resolution as soon as the report of the Fifth Committee on its programme budget implications is available.

We now turn to the draft decision, entitled "Documents relating to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft decision recommended by the Second Committee?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 98.

(b) International strategy for disaster reduction

Report of the Second Committee
(A/56/561/Add.2)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the two draft resolutions recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 10 of its report.

We turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "International cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon".

The Second Committee adopted draft resolution I. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 56/194).

The President: The Second Committee adopted draft resolution II, entitled "International Strategy for Disaster Reduction". May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 56/195).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 98?

It was so decided.

(c) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa

Report of the Second Committee
(A/54/561/Add.3)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 9 of its report.

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/196).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 98?

It was so decided.

(d) Convention on Biological Diversity

Report of the Second Committee
(A/56/561/Add.4)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/197).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 98?

It was so decided.

(e) Further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/561/Add.5)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The draft resolution is entitled "Further implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States".

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/198).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (e) of agenda item 98?

It was so decided.

(f) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/561/Add.6)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 9 of its report.

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/199).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (f) of agenda item 98?

It was so decided.

(g) Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy, including the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/561/Add.7)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/200).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 98?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 99

Operational activities for development

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/562)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The draft decision is entitled "Report on the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women". May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to adopt the draft decision recommended by the Second Committee?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 99.

(a) Triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/562/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/201).

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 99?

It was so decided.

(b) Economic and technical cooperation among developing countries

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/562/Add.2)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 11 of its report and on the draft decision recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 12 of the same report.

We turn first to the draft resolution, entitled "Economic and technical cooperation among developing countries".

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/202).

The President: We shall now turn to the draft decision entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community".

The Second Committee adopted the draft decision. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 99?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 99 as a whole.

Agenda item 100

International migration and development, including the question of the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development to address migration issues

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/563)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 9 of its report.

The draft resolution is entitled "International migration and development".

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take that it is the wish of the Assembly to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/203).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 100?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 101

Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/564)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 10 of its report.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), United States of America.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Fiji, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea.

The draft resolution was adopted by 148 votes to 4, with 4 abstentions (resolution 56/204).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 101?

It was so decided.

Mr. Balzan (Malta), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 102

Implementation of the Habitat Agenda and outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on this topic

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/565)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the two draft resolutions recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 16 of its report.

We turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "Special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)".

The Second Committee adopted draft resolution I. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 56/205).

The Acting President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Strengthening the mandate and status of the Commission on Human Settlements and the status, role and functions of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)".

The Second Committee adopted draft resolution II. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 56/206).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 102.

Agenda item 103

Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/566)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 10 of its report.

The draft resolution is entitled "Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006), including the proposal to establish a world solidarity fund for poverty eradication".

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/207).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 103?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 104

Training and research

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/567)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 11 of its report. The draft resolution is entitled "United Nations Institute for Training and Research".

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/208).

The Acting President: I call on the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Group of 77, to make an explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Tootoonchian (Islamic Republic of Iran): On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I wish to make a few pertinent comments on agenda item 104 as it relates to the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the resolution just adopted.

We wish to recall that, in his report in document A/56/615, the Secretary-General informed the General Assembly that he could not, as the Assembly had requested of him in resolution 55/208 of 20 December 2000, reclassify the rental rates and maintenance costs charged to UNITAR with a view to alleviating the Institute's financial difficulties, which are aggravated by the current practice of charging commercial rates, taking into account that other organizations affiliated with the United Nations enjoy such privileges. In effect, the Secretary-General advised that only the General Assembly has the authority to do such reclassification.

The General Assembly, in fact, has not done any such reclassification yet. The financial situation of UNITAR with respect to its General Fund remains very poor, considering the fact that the Institute receives no subsidy from the United Nations regular budget and that it provides its training programmes free of charge. Until such a desirable remedial measure is taken — and my Group hopes that it will be sooner than later — it is pertinent to observe that our Assembly this year is requesting the Secretary-General to clarify the reason why the Institute does not benefit from rental rates and maintenance costs similar to those enjoyed by other United Nations-affiliated organizations and to submit proposals on how to waive or reduce the rental rates and maintenance costs charged to the Institute. The resolution also calls on the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its next session, including details on the status of contributions to, and the financial situation of, the Institute, as well as on the use of its services by Member States.

The Group of 77 and China supported and joined in the consensus on this resolution. That was on the basis of our understanding that any demand that UNITAR meet its financial obligations on rent and maintenance costs at commercial rates would be made upon the completion of full consideration of the aforementioned details, to be made available by the next session, as requested, thus enabling the General Assembly to reach a decision that will impact positively on the financial situation of UNITAR and allow it to continue its good work.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 104?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 105

Globalization and interdependence

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/568)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 9 of its report. The draft resolution is entitled "Role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence".

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/209).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 105?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 106

Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/569)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 12 of its report and a draft decision recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 13 of the same report.

I should like to inform members that action on the draft resolution is postponed to allow time for the review of its programme budget implications by the Fifth Committee. The Assembly will take action on the draft resolution as soon as the report of the Fifth Committee on its programme budget implications is available.

We turn to the draft decision, entitled "Documents relating to the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries".

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt the draft decision recommended by the Second Committee?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 106.

Agenda item 107

High-level international intergovernmental consideration of financing for development

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/570)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 14 of its report and on two draft decisions recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 15 of the same report.

The Assembly will turn first to the draft resolution, entitled "International Conference on Financing for Development".

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 56/210).

The Acting President: We turn now to the two draft decisions.

Draft decision I is entitled "Format of the International Conference on Financing for Development".

The Second Committee adopted draft decision I. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: Draft decision II is entitled "Provisional rules of procedure for the International Conference on Financing for Development".

The Second Committee adopted draft decision II. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 107.

Agenda item 12

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the Second Committee (A/56/571)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the three draft resolutions recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 23 of its report and on the three draft decisions recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 24 of the same report.

I should like to inform members that action on draft decision I is postponed to allow time for the review of its programme budget implications by the Fifth Committee. The Assembly will take action on draft decision I as soon as the report of the Fifth Committee on its programme budget implications is available.

The Assembly will turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields".

The Second Committee adopted draft resolution I. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 56/211).

The Acting President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Global Code of Ethics for Tourism".

The Second Committee adopted draft resolution II. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 56/212).

The Acting President: Draft resolution III is entitled "Public administration and development".

The Second Committee adopted draft resolution III. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution III was adopted (resolution 56/213).

The Acting President: We next turn to the draft decisions.

As announced earlier, action on draft decision I is postponed.

Draft decision II is entitled "Documents relating to the report of the Economic and Social Council".

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to adopt draft decision II?

Draft decision II was adopted.

The Acting President: The Second Committee adopted draft decision III, entitled "Biennial programme of work of the Second Committee for 2002-2003". May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft decision III was adopted.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 12.

Agenda item 32

Multilingualism

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/656)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.44/Rev.1)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of France to introduce draft resolution A/56/L.44/Rev.1.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): We are about to begin an important, even essential, debate regarding the life of the Organization.

This is the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, a dialogue of cultures. We had an impassioned debate on this subject that reflects what this house should be — the family of all nations united. Naturally, the vehicle for this dialogue is language — that is, our languages.

This is an issue that must bring us together. It would, indeed, be paradoxical and unfortunate if the dialogue among cultures were to be carried out in our respective languages while we remained divided with regard to those languages.

We are approaching this debate with a straightforward idea in mind: that the diversity of our cultures and languages is a great asset for humankind. Language is, for each individual, the most important asset, which is passed to him through education. For humankind, linguistic diversity is a source of enrichment that must be preserved. For the United Nations, cultural and linguistic diversity are benefits, and it is our duty to ensure that the rules of the game are duly respected.

We approached this debate and the elaboration of the draft resolution with the desire to better understand the problems that confront us all in a spirit of mutual respect. We are deeply convinced that on this particular issue we must maintain real consensus. Languages should bring us closer together, not divide us.

In this spirit, we have already made one request for the postponement of action on the draft resolution because, when discussing the issue with delegations, we gained the impression that we had not yet reached true consensus. Since we made that request, we have contacted all delegations concerned so as to listen to their comments and consider their problems.

The first problem arises with regard to recruitment here and in other institutions within the United Nations family. In this respect, there are basically three groups of countries that face very different problems. Each problem should be duly considered, and each group of countries should take note of the difficulties faced by others.

The first group of countries facing problems is represented here by, for example, Japan — I would like to pay tribute Ambassador Yukio Satoh, and I thank him for his understanding — as well as by Germany, Korea and Thailand, among others. These are great countries that speak languages that are not considered official languages of the United Nations. It is essential that we appreciate the specific problems faced by these countries, whose young people, full of enthusiasm and eager to serve the United Nations, cannot rely on their mother tongue in order to be recruited into the United Nations family. We should be mindful of their problems.

The second group is made up of all of those countries from the South that have a mother tongue and a language of communication. India is one such country — and I should like to pay tribute to the representative of India, who is here in the Hall. It is a country that has many mother tongues, as well as a language of communication — English. This situation also applies to Nigeria, South Africa and other countries. We should try to understand their problem, which is quite straightforward. Their universities do not have the financial means to teach — over and above the mother tongue — a language of communication other than English at that level. We should try to understand that.

The third category of countries facing problems is made up of those whose mother tongue is not one of the official languages of the United Nations and whose language of communication is not English, but one of the other official languages. Such difficulties would be faced, for example, by a young Bolivian national whose mother tongue was Quechua but whose language of communication was Spanish. This situation applies to a number of countries in Latin America, the Arab world and from French-speaking countries. Senegal, for example, has a mother tongue and a language of communication, which is French.

Given this very diverse background, we tried to draw up a paragraph in the draft resolution that could take into account the concerns of the various groups. I hope and believe that we managed to achieve this. I would like to read out the form of words that we came up with after lengthy consultations with the various groups.

Paragraph 5 of the draft resolution in A/56/L.44/Rev.1 reads as follows:

> "Urges the Secretariat, when recruiting staff, to take into account the knowledge of an official language of the United Nations, in addition to the language of general parlance within the country of the candidates or their mother tongue, whether or not the latter is an official language of the United Nations".

The language of the paragraph might seem a little complicated, but it is designed is to meet the concerns of all the countries Members of the United Nations family, and I believe that it does so. Of course, this is an important issue, because when recruiting young generations into the Secretariat and United Nations

agencies, it is important that the concerns of the 189 Member States be taken into account.

A second issue which deserved in-depth discussion concerned the promotion of staff members once they had been recruited by the Secretariat. Paragraph 4 of the draft resolution deals with that matter. It refers specifically to Article 101 of the Charter, and I believe that it is important to underscore that the only criteria governing promotion should be competence, efficiency and professional skills, with, as the Charter states in Article 101, due account being taken of equitable geographic distribution. At the same time, in order to work in accordance with the spirit of the Charter, I believe it is essential to encourage Secretariat staff to learn a language additional to the official United Nations language that they already speak when they are recruited. That is the spirit of paragraph 4 of the draft resolution.

There are also a number of issues that are of growing concern to many delegations in their daily lives: the problem of interpretation in conferences and meetings, and the problem of the time it takes to translate documents into the official languages. These problems are purely organizational in nature, and I believe that the General Assembly should encourage the Secretariat to organize itself better so that interpretation and translation services can be carried out more efficiently and translations produced more quickly.

One could argue that all this costs money. We have verified this with the Secretariat and it has said no, that this is a draft resolution without budgetary implications. The Secretariat stands ready to confirm this. The fact is that, whether it is done sooner or done later, translating a document always involves cost. We are simply asking the Secretariat to organize itself so that translations into the official languages are available more quickly.

We worked at length with the various delegations on the basis of the excellent report prepared by the Secretary-General on this important issue. The Secretary-General has appointed a new Coordinator for Multilingualism, namely, our friend Miles Stoby. We believe this is a very good starting point to making further progress. However, the 101 sponsors of the draft resolution — France is the one-hundred and second sponsor — realized that we had not yet achieved complete consensus on this subject.

Some have said that the budgetary implications of the draft resolution had to be reviewed. Fine, let us do so. Others have said that some of the wording had to be reviewed by their capitals. Let us take the time to do that. Therefore, in the spirit of patient dialogue to achieve a genuine consensus decision on the issue of language diversity — a topic that should never divide us but, rather, should bring us closer together — France, with the agreement of the 101 other sponsors, suggests that we not take a decision on the draft resolution today and that we put off its adoption to a date to be determined when the Assembly reconvenes next year, so that we can adopt it unanimously and with full understanding of the issue. We believe that, on this issue, we all have to be clear as to what we want to achieve, and then decide together to act in unison. We therefore suggest that there be a postponement on a decision on this draft resolution until we reconvene, at the beginning of next year, with a genuine consensus.

Mr. Chandra (India): It is sad, but fitting, that we take up this agenda item on multilingualism on a day when we have learned of the death of President Léopold Senghor of Senegal, because no one understood better than he did what true multilingualism meant and the need to cultivate a knowledge of languages to bridge the apparent gaps between cultures and civilizations. He thought that African and Asian languages — so different as to seem to be the voices of completely separate cultures — had similarities that revealed an ancient common route. Believing, on the basis of his own scholarship, that there were linkages between the Dravidian languages of India and languages spoken in West Africa, President Senghor set up a chair in Dravidian studies at the University of Dakar to explore, celebrate and develop those links between Africa and India, and between our culture and languages. We pay tribute to his vision.

Multilingualism is a mixed blessing. It is a Babel that divides; it is only very rarely a Pentecostal gift of tongues. Of course, being monolingual promotes insularity rather than unity. Several countries, not just two, are divided by a common language. It is important therefore to know both the power and the limits of language. In our region a country created on the basis of religion broke up on the basis of language. Elsewhere nations that share a language have been torn apart by religion. The United Nations certainly needs to seriously discuss the challenges of multilingualism.

It is a challenge with which we grew up in India. Every Indian learns his mother tongue; and all Indians learn Hindi, which is our official language. Very large numbers of Indians live outside the Indian states where their mother tongues are spoken, and they learn the language of their adopted states. All Indian languages are complex. Almost none share a script, which means that all Indians, by the time they are in middle school, have learned two — and quite often three — languages with scripts as different as Russian and French, and sometimes as different as Spanish and Arabic, all of them with a rich and ancient literary heritage. Simultaneously they are taught English. So by the time they leave school most Indians speak two, or sometimes three, Indian languages and English. As was also noted by Ambassador Levitte in his statement, to be Indian therefore means to be multilingual.

We understand the words used and the uses of multilingualism. But we also know that it can be used to side-step a dialogue rather than to invite it. During our colonial interregnum, when Indian maharajas were forced to accept a British Resident at their *darbars*, one of them, knowing that most Englishmen in India were monoglots and, of any foreign language, were likely to have the most distaste for French, decreed that French would be the language of his court. For many years, through this ingenious embrace of multilingualism, he made sure that he did not have to exchange a word with successive British Residents.

That clever maharaja has been born again in many avatars at the United Nations. His voice is heard whenever representatives fortunate enough to have one of the official languages as their mother tongue insist that they would stop negotiating if they were forced to speak in a foreign language. They forget that most representatives have no choice. Indians, for instance, or Japanese, Nigerians or Brazilians never get to speak in their mother tongues at the United Nations. At a recent meeting, when interpretation stopped, the South African Chairman's proposal to continue in English provoked outrage from others who accused him of partiality, arguing that they would be put at a disadvantage if they could not speak in their mother tongues. "I agree with you", said the Chairman, and started to speak in Zulu. Multilingual protests quickly faded then into tongue-tied embarrassment.

At the United Nations now, as in that distant Indian court, language is politics. Human beings, not States, speak languages, but it is the interplay of State politics that has determined which would be the official languages of the United Nations. Hindi, for instance, is spoken by over 1 billion people in India and is understood or spoken by millions more in the rest of South Asia and in the Indian diaspora. More people speak Hindi than speak French or, for example, Russian or Arabic. But Hindi is not an official language of the United Nations.

Questions are asked about that in the Indian Parliament. Although we explain that each additional official language raises the cost of conference services exponentially, we are not sure that this entirely satisfies our parliamentarians, because they see the choice of the six official languages as arbitrary at best, giving those a status denied to others which have as good a claim or better to be considered world languages.

We know that the United Nations cannot have a vast number of official languages, but what the United Nations should not do is confuse multilingualism with the promotion of only the six languages it has dubbed official. These six languages are privileged over hundreds of others. However, class distinctions have crept in among them. One has become more equal than others, and the others resent this.

To put this in terms of feudal experience, the barons are up in arms against the king, but for the plebeians, this is not their fight. It promotes no interest of theirs.

We thank France for trying to accommodate all shades of concern. However, even as amended, the draft before us proposes changes in administrative policy that cannot and should not be smuggled in through a draft resolution on multilingualism. These are issues that should be considered in the Fifth Committee, in the light not just of present practice, but, even more importantly, of the principles of the Charter.

If implemented, the proposal made in this draft would place an enormous extra burden on those who do not have an official language as their mother tongue. It would ignore the fact that an Indian staff member, for instance, was already at least trilingual, but would expect him or her to have learned a second foreign language in addition to English. But not one Indian language is an official language. We would consider this the promotion not of multilingualism but of prejudice.

Nationals of the major contributors dominate the Secretariat, because most of the posts are allocated on the basis of contributions. The two working languages of the Secretariat are European languages. Four out of the six official languages are also European languages. It is not surprising, therefore, that most developing countries feel that the Secretariat — either consciously or simply because of the way it is composed and functions — promotes a Western agenda. Multilingualism has not made it multicultural or given it a truly international personality.

What the Secretariat promotes as universal norms are usually the latest Western fads. But rarely does the Secretariat betray a consciousness that it is supposed to be an institution that gathers together all cultures, different traditions of thought and a variety of points of view. Anything that makes it even more difficult for the Secretariat to recruit from developing countries or to promote their nationals within the system will strengthen the bias that already exists.

We in India cherish multilingualism, simply because we cannot get by without it. We welcome any initiative to promote true multilingualism, but we deeply regret the fact that the draft resolution before us strays into areas of administrative policy that would warp even more the structure of the Secretariat, promote linguistic chauvinism and create problems for our nationals.

Mr. Satoh (Japan): At the outset, I should like to stress that Japan respects the status of the six official languages of the United Nations and that it is by no means our intention to challenge the principle of multilingualism as such.

However, looking at the issue in the context of this draft resolution, I have to point out, with all due respect to the French Ambassador, that the draft before us — although some amendments have been made to it since last week — is not yet acceptable to us, primarily for the following reasons.

First, there is serious concern that, should the draft resolution be adopted, paragraph 4 would have an adverse impact on nationals whose mother tongue is not one of the official languages of the United Nations, since it states that

> "the promotion of staff...should take into account adequate and confirmed knowledge of a second official language".

This is a matter of particular concern with respect to nationals of developing countries where only one of the official United Nations languages is taught at school. There can be no justification for the United Nations to discriminate against such nationals or place them at a disadvantage on the basis of their mother tongue.

Secondly, we are concerned that this draft resolution, particularly its paragraph 5, would, if I am not mistaken, result in discrimination in the recruitment of nationals who have no other mother tongue than one of the six official languages. That paragraph requests the Secretary-General, when recruiting staff, to take into account the knowledge of an official language of the United Nations in addition to their own mother tongue. Here again there is no justification for bringing any element of discrimination into the system of recruitment.

Thirdly, the draft resolution, if adopted, would still have a greater negative impact on the United Nations system than the previous resolution — 50/11 of 1995 — because it expands the scope of application to include the funds and programmes of the United Nations. Resolution 50/11 applied only to the United Nations and not to the funds and programmes.

It is also important that we study the implications of the other parts of the draft resolution more carefully before we consider expanding its application.

Given all of these problems, we must question whether this draft resolution would serve the purpose of multilingualism in its true sense. We consider, rather, that it could, despite the intention of its proponent, inadvertently work against that purpose.

I must also point out that my delegation has learned that many countries want to have more time to study this draft resolution carefully. I see no reason why we have to consider this draft, which contains so many decisive elements, at the very end of the year and with little time to debate this issue. I should like to propose, therefore, that we defer consideration of the draft resolution to next year in order to allow us to discuss it thoroughly. In this context, I appreciate the understanding of the matter expressed by the French Ambassador.

Finally, I should like to add that we agree with the proposal just made by the Indian representative to refer this matter to the Fifth Committee.

Mr. Kennedy (United States of America): As a multicultural country, the United States fully supports and appreciates multilingualism. Residents of the Borough of Queens, here in New York City, claim the greatest level of ethnic diversity of any county in the United States. Residents of Queens represent over 120 countries and speak more than 100 languages. In fact, New York City's foreign-born residents account for more than 35 per cent of its population. As Mayor Giuliani said in this Hall on 1 October, Americans are not a single ethnic group; Americans are not one race or one religion; Americans emerged from all nations.

While fully respecting the principles of multilingualism, my delegation must voice its strong concern regarding several of the provisions of the draft resolution in document A/56/L.44/Rev.1. For example, the second part of paragraph 4

> "urges the Secretariat ... to ensure, in particular when promoting staff, respect for equality of the working languages of the Secretariat ... and of their use".

How would the Secretariat ensure respect for the equality of French and English in the Secretariat and of their use? Does this language imply the application of a quota system? Would such provisions be implemented at the expense of competing staff members whose mother tongue is not French or English and override other considerations, including competency and experience?

There is no legislative provision that specifies that working languages must be used equally. The principle of the equality of the working languages — and, in fact, of all languages, be they official or non-official — is not in dispute and, hopefully, is accepted by all delegations.

The question in the second part of paragraph 4 involves the utilization of the working languages in the everyday work of the Secretariat. Use is simply based on practical considerations, including, as stated in the Secretary-General's report under this item, the language of the host country.

Paragraph 5 of the draft resolution is, at best, meaningless, since it is subject to the requirements of Article 101 (3) of the Charter. It is, at worst, discriminatory, since it implies that further conditions should be placed on the requirements found in Articles 8 and 101 of the Charter. The United States cannot support such language, since its strict application would have the effect of penalizing applicants for United Nations positions whose mother tongue is not one of the official six languages. In effect, its strict application would require such applicants to be trilingual — to speak not only their first language, but also English or French plus another official language.

Many prospective United Nations staff members who do not speak one of the official languages as their first language are from developing countries whose nationals are underrepresented in the Secretariat. This paragraph clearly detracts from the universal and multicultural character of the Organization. We urge all delegations not to support such discriminatory language. The hallmark of the United Nations should be inclusiveness, not discrimination.

Many provisions of the draft resolution before us go beyond current human resources legislation. The full implications of such personnel issues should be considered with care and deliberation in the Fifth Committee following full and constructive consultations with the sponsors.

My delegation also cannot support paragraph 7. Implementation of that paragraph would have the effect of hindering the negotiating process not only in the General Assembly and its Committees, but also in the Security Council and its sub-bodies. Implementation of provisions urging Member States to plan working meetings to allow them to be held, except under exceptional circumstances, on the basis of documents which have been translated in good time would place undue burdens on the Secretariat and Member States and have a profound negative impact on the decision-making process. As stated in the Secretary-General's report,

> "There are no provisions requiring the Secretariat to provide translations in all the official languages of preliminary texts of draft resolutions". (*A/56/656, para. 41*)

As we all know, delegations must often conduct negotiations under severe time constraints, including on questions of peace, security and humanitarian relief. Such important work should not and cannot be hindered by implementation of this paragraph.

We also note that there have been no estimates of expenditures, as required by rule 153 of the General Assembly's rules of procedure. Thus, there will be no

expenditure of any kind in implementing the provisions of this draft resolution and therefore all the activities required by this draft resolution can and will be accomplished within existing resources. If that is the case, and this work can be accomplished by the redeployment of resources, one must ask whether the paramount goals of this Organization will suffer from the redirection of effort. Also, it would have serious financial consequences by adding additional responsibilities and requirements to conference services. This is a matter that needs a statement of programme budget implications and that should be carefully and thoroughly reviewed and considered at the resumed fifty-sixth session, as the draft's introducer suggested.

I would also like to comment on paragraphs 1 and 8 through 11. By paragraph 1, the General Assembly would welcome the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General. Since the report does not contain recommendations, it is not possible for us to consider such language. Since the calendar of conferences includes meetings of all organs, we would like to ask the sponsors to explain how they arrived at the conclusion in paragraph 8 concerning meetings of General Assembly Committees. What data is this conclusion based on? In any event, the trend concerning the holding of calendar meetings without interpretation is not on the rise, as illustrated in the table in the Secretary-General's report. This is a question of practicality and the prioritization of resources is decided by Member States.

Concerning paragraph 9, my delegation would like to ask the sponsors to explain the meaning of

> "publish statistical information concerning the acquisition policy of the libraries and documentation centres of the various organs, according to linguistic criteria".

Do the sponsors mean to publish statistics on the number of books and electronic resources acquired by libraries and documentation centres of the various organs in the six official languages?

Acquisition decisions cannot be based solely on linguistic criteria. One cannot divide a budget into six equal parts and make acquisition decisions accordingly. Not all books and databases are available in the six languages. Acquisition policies must be based on a number of factors, including relevance, professional reputation of the author or editor, language availability and the projected usage of the materials. This is a question that should be considered, if necessary, in the Committee on Information and the Fourth Committee.

It appears inappropriate for a draft resolution being considered directly in plenary to contain specific language calling for development of a minor research tool, as included in paragraph 10. Again, this language should be considered in the Committee on Information and the Fourth Committee. All delegations and capitals have access to the Official Document System (ODS). ODS contains the full text in the six official languages of all parliamentary documents. In the first quarter of next year, all users of ODS will be able to search for documents in the System using words in the official language of their choice. With full multilingual support, there is very little need for a multilingual glossary.

Concerning paragraph 11, it is not clear to my delegation what the sponsors mean by "any statistical information on the development of the use of languages within the Secretariat". Considering the fact that French and English are the working languages of the Secretariat, it is unclear to my delegation which languages are being referred to. Do the sponsors mean the number of participants in the language courses offered by the Secretariat, or the number of reports and working papers drafted in French or English? If the sponsors are referring to the use of the official languages of the General Assembly or the Security Council in the Secretariat, they are blurring the distinctions between the working languages of the Secretariat and the official and working languages of those and other organs.

According to the authoritative reference work, *Ethnologue: Volume 1 — Languages of the World*, the six official languages are spoken by 35 per cent of first-language speakers worldwide. Application of multilingualism in the United Nations context does not equate with universality or cultural diversity. As representatives of a culturally diverse society, my delegation cherishes multilingualism, but its application in this context must be considered in light of questions of practicality and necessity, limited resources, fairness to all delegations and other priorities, as decided by all Member States.

Mr. Douigi (Papua New Guinea): The title of this agenda item should not be "Multilingualism". The title is misleading for reasons that will become apparent in

my statement. In fact, the title should be "United Nations personnel recruitment and development".

The criteria for the employment and promotion of staff at the Secretariat and in other organs of the United Nations are specified in Article 101(3) of the Charter of the United Nations. This Article is very clear in its language. It says that the paramount consideration in the employment of staff shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. These are the primary considerations with respect to the qualifications and capacity of the individual. They are the standards, which could be classified as subjective, as they involve an analysis of the qualifications, experience, knowledge, personal aptitudes, demeanour and capacity of the individual.

Article 101 also provides that due regard is to be given to recruitment of staff from "as wide a geographical basis as possible". This appears to be the only objective criterion allowed or provided for by the Charter. A draft resolution on this subject must not attempt to amend Article 101 of the Charter to provide for an additional objective criterion of language. Amendments to the Charter must follow the procedure set out in Chapter XVIII of the Charter. That, in our view, is the correct procedure.

There is a second, and equally important, consideration. Most small developing countries are already very disadvantaged and are not properly represented in the United Nations system. The geographical criterion has not worked for us. Why, then, should we be required to accept an additional criterion or hurdle for getting, first, employment and secondly, a promotion in the United Nations system? The Charter makes it plain that criteria other than the ones stated in Article 101 should not be entertained.

The Purposes of the United Nations are specified in Article 1 of the Charter. Paragraph 3 of this Article calls for "fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion". A draft resolution that runs counter to this freedom from any distinction based on language should not be allowed. It is saying that an applicant who does not have a working knowledge of the second language of the United Nations should not bother applying for a position within the United Nations system, even though that applicant has attained the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. It is also saying that an officer of the United Nations who has not found time to learn another language because of his dedication and commitment to his professional duties and obligations has no future in the Organization because he would not be considered for promotion. This would positively promote discrimination against those who lack knowledge of the second official language of the United Nations and is contrary to their right to freedom of employment.

Thirdly, we consider a resolution on multilingualism to be a resolution dealing with the preservation and promotion of languages. My country has more than 800 languages. We are trying desperately to preserve these languages. We also note that Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights provides that the Declaration is based on the principle that

> "the rights of all language communities are equal and independent of their legal status as official, regional or minority languages. Terms such as regional or minority languages are not used in this Declaration because, though in certain cases the recognition of regional or minority languages can facilitate the exercise of certain rights, these and other modifiers are frequently used to restrict the rights of language communities."

We understand fully the effects of the colonization of a group of people on language. The resulting effect is the survival of one language as against another. The term "colonization" in its broadest meaning is the subjugation of the rights of one by another. A draft resolution on this subject should not have the effect of legislating to subjugate the rights of an individual to freedom of employment and freedom of choice of language. The United Nations stands for the preservation and promotion of these freedoms and individual rights. The General Assembly must not legislate to legitimize restrictions on these rights and freedoms.

For 99 per cent of Papua New Guineans, the English language is either the third or even the fourth language. Given our geographical location, why should we be asked to learn an additional European or other foreign language, when it has no direct relevance to everyday life or to trade and economic activities in our country, let alone the region? Given a choice of languages, we would prefer Bahasa Indonesia, spoken by our neighbour, or Japanese, spoken by one of our

largest trading partners. Given the choice of a European language, we would probably opt for German, also for trading reasons. None of these is listed as an official language of the United Nations.

We have maintained our right to freedom of choice of language. We must maintain our right to freedom of choice of employment. This freedom is specified in article 23 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In fact, the right to work is specified in article 6 (1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and article 7 (c) provides specifically that everyone should be given a reasonable opportunity to be promoted in his employment and that this opportunity should not be subject to considerations other than those of "seniority and competence". This right must not be restricted or regulated by legislation that promotes discrimination against those who are "linguistically challenged".

Fourthly, we are strongly of the view that the United Nations must be serviced by the best technical and professional expertise that the Member States have to offer. The best technical and professional person may not necessarily be capable of mastering additional new languages. That person should not, therefore, be denied an opportunity for employment and promotion in the system. We believe that in matters of personnel hiring and development, the Secretary-General must be given absolute freedom and discretion with regard to choice of personnel. We must determine policies only in respect to what we expect the Secretariat to do or carry out. We must refrain from micromanaging the Organization.

These are matters on which the Secretary-General must be required to report. If there is lacklustre performance, then we must require the Secretary-General to undertake a review to improve that performance. But we should not begin to tell him whom he should employ and whom he should not promote. An attempt to do so would be to rewrite his terms of employment. It also, in our view, implies that the sponsors question his appointments and promotions to date — thus the necessity to give him precise instructions in respect to these matters. If this is an indictment on the Secretary-General's performance, then we would like to place on record our firm view that any such conclusion is unsubstantiated by any evidence before us. In fact, no such evidence has been brought to our attention.

If the primary problem is in the Secretariat servicing the Member States, then we are not averse to looking at improving the system to provide better interpretation and other facilities for Member States within the system. However, we are not convinced that the servicing of Member States will necessarily be enhanced by requiring, through legislation, those technical and professional officers to be multilingual.

I must add that I agree with the arguments put forward by India, Japan and the United States before me.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Spanish-speaking countries that are Members of the United Nations.

I would like to begin my statement by paying tribute to the great African cultural figure and humanist, Léopold Senghor.

The Charter of the United Nations was written in six languages — Spanish being one of them — and legally deposited in the archives of the United States. International law is multilingual. Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are both the official and the working languages of the General Assembly, its committees and its subcommittees, and of the Security Council. This is not a discriminatory language regime, but a pragmatic one; it would be impossible to select all of the languages of the world. It is also a vehicle for integration, since the languages chosen as official languages were — and continue to be — those spoken by a greater number of people.

The raison d'être and the credibility of the United Nations lie in its diversity and universality. Multilingualism was integral to its conceptual foundation, and we therefore welcome the appointment of a coordinator to deal with these issues, thus according multilingualism the importance it deserves. In selecting the six official languages of the Organization, the founders were, without doubt, guided by that integrative and universal spirit. Therefore, we should consider the use of these official languages — chosen precisely because of their global scope — not as discriminatory or restrictive with regard to any Member State, but as an element of integration and universality.

In this sense, it is clear that the use of only one language would be more discriminatory than the use of six languages that are spoken throughout a large part of

world. Spanish, for example, is spoken by about 400 million people throughout the world. On the basis of population forecasts, that number will rise to 550 million by 2050.

The widespread use of a single language would mean that not only Spanish, but the other official languages, would fall into disuse. The reality is that, for example, in the Organization's public information, and particularly on its Internet site, there is an overwhelming difference between the information provided in English and in the other official languages. Only one tenth of the people of the world speak English, but at present 80 per cent of the content of the Web is in that language. The United Nations should make an effort to have a more equitable distribution of information, reflecting the diversity of the world that is represented here.

We are concerned that at the beginning of the twenty-first century there is a trend towards the use of a single language in the work the United Nations — an Organization of global reach that is trying to communicate with all peoples and civil society. Our position on this matter is clear: there can be no multilingualism if United Nations officials are monolingual. That is why, while we appreciate the steps taken by the Secretary-General to increase and encourage the learning and teaching of languages among United Nations officials, we would like to express our concern about the fact that, as the Secretary-General's report on multilingualism acknowledges, there is at present no legislative requirement for United Nations personnel to speak more than one working language, or even one other official language of the Organization.

During the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, in 1995, the United Nations expressed the desire that personnel recruited by the Organization should have a command of and use at least one of the six official languages of the Organization in addition to one working language of the Secretariat. Six years later, we believe that the time has come to take practical measures gradually to translate that desire into reality.

In conclusion, my delegation, and the countries that I have the honour to represent, believe not that the peoples must learn one single language of the United Nations or any other global institution, but, rather, that the institutions that govern and direct globalization must learn the language of the peoples.

In this respect, we believe firmly in the advisability of reaching consensus on this important matter. That is why we agree that we should postpone action on the draft resolution so that we can reach general agreement.

Ms. Chan (Singapore): Singapore is a strong supporter of the concept of multiculturalism, of which multilingualism is an important aspect. We are a multi-ethnic, multireligious and multilingual society, and our national policies reflect this. We have four official languages — English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil — of which two are also official languages of the United Nations.

Our policy of official multilingualism was originally introduced out of necessity when we achieved independence as a small and heterogeneously populated State. Over the years, we have come to appreciate this policy for its own sake as a practical demonstration of the diversity which we believe to be one of our strengths as a nation. We are therefore strongly supportive of and sympathetic to the promotion of multilingualism in the United Nations, which for us represents, in an important way, the international community's respect for cultural and linguistic diversity.

Unfortunately, my delegation has serious reservations about the draft resolution that has been introduced today. Had it been presented for action in its current form, we would regretfully have voted against it. We are of the view that the Fifth Committee would have been a more appropriate forum in which to introduce the draft resolution. Several operative paragraphs of the draft, paragraph 4 in particular, would have significant long-term human resource, budgetary and organizational implications for the United Nations system. Decisions in the Fifth Committee are normally reached by consensus precisely because that Committee deals with issues with financial implications for all Member States. This draft resolution should also be brought to the General Assembly only as a consensus text.

We are concerned that this draft, while well-meaning, would inadvertently promote discrimination among the Member States. It is obviously necessary, on practical grounds, for United Nations personnel to speak at least one of the working languages of the

United Nations. But many Member States do not have any of the six official languages as national languages. The negative implications for United Nations employees from such States are obvious. These countries already have the burden of training personnel in one foreign language. If this draft resolution were adopted, citizens of such countries would suffer an additional handicap in their careers in the United Nations unless their countries found the resources to train them in a second official language. The new provisions of this draft would also extend this handicap beyond the United Nations to the executive agencies — that is, throughout the entire United Nations system.

Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter states that

> "The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity."

While other considerations can be taken into account, any individual consideration should not be given prominence over any other.

We would like to express our great appreciation to the sponsors of the draft resolution for their constructive and helpful approach in not requesting action on the draft resolution at this time. A vote on this issue would have been unnecessarily divisive and, in the long-term, unhelpful to the entirely worthy cause that this draft resolution seeks to promote. We fully concur that this issue is best addressed through a consensus text. We look forward with pleasure to participating in further consultations to achieve that end.

Mr. Fahmy (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend my thanks to the Secretary-General for his report, and to welcome the appointment of Assistant Secretary-General Miles Stoby as Coordinator for Multilingualism. We have read the Secretary-General's report and welcome his efforts to follow a comprehensive policy aimed at enhancing the language proficiency of United Nations staff by encouraging them to learn another of the six official languages and by making knowledge of additional official languages an incentive for their appointment and promotion.

When the Arabic language was introduced as an official language, in 1974, it was a landmark event that focused tremendous attention on the Arab community in all areas of the Organization's activities. Multilingualism in the United Nations requires equality among the six official languages. My delegation therefore believes that all official languages should be treated equally and that this should apply to all areas and subjects, whether with regard to United Nations documents or to interpretation services for meetings.

The establishment of the United Nations web site, in 1995, was the start of a pioneering project that embodied the desire of the United Nations to benefit from the latest scientific achievements in order to disseminate the positions and views of Member States. We continue to look forward to the day when the General Assembly will take the bold decision to achieve language equality on the web site. At a time when the Secretary-General is called upon to respond to the recommendations of the Committee on Information and submit specific proposals to achieve the goal of language equality on the web site, we wish to re-emphasize the resolutions adopted by the Committee at its latest session, calling upon the Secretary-General to ensure the fair and equal distribution of financial and human resources earmarked for the web site among the six official languages.

Finally, the delegation of Egypt believes that respect for multilingualism — one of the basic principles in the work of the United Nations — is a guarantee of fruitful cooperation among Member States. The General Assembly should therefore reiterate the principle of the equality of all official languages. In that context, we call for the endorsement of the draft resolution on multilingualism, which could lend momentum to a fruitful dialogue among civilizations.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Charter provision on the use of various languages in the Organization is a reflection of the universal nature of the Organization and a recognition by its founders and Members that without multilingualism, the United Nations cannot make it possible for the peoples and nations of the world to know its purposes and principles and to appreciate the programmes it devises to tackle the problems it aims to solve, or the plans it has for solving current and future challenges.

My delegation is delighted to note that, at this session, the Secretariat is about to draft specific strategies to deal with the shortcomings in the pattern of language use in the Organization. We also welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to realize the aim of multilingualism on the United Nations web site. It is our hope that this commitment will include the publication in all six official languages of all communications and statements issued by the United Nations, listings of the events organized by the Secretariat and summaries of the deliberations of the Security Council.

The report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/56/656 contains detailed information on activities aimed at enhancing multilingualism. We wish to refer specifically to the language training programme, which teaches the six official languages, and the incentives to encourage staff to learn those languages and to excel in two or more of them. In view of the increasing numbers of staff joining the language training programme, my delegation supports dedicating more human and financial resources to it to enable it to achieve the objectives of enriching cultural and intellectual diversity, which the United Nations should safeguard.

By resolution 36/117, of 10 December 1981, the General Assembly decided that all documents should be distributed in the official languages at the same time. In subsequent resolutions — including resolution 53/208, of 18 December 1998 — the General Assembly affirmed that no document should be distributed until it is available in all official languages. Although my delegation recognizes the improvements that have been made, I must nevertheless state that the provisions on the distribution of documents in all languages is not strictly abided by, and this presents an obstacle to the participation of some delegations in the work of the General Assembly and other international forums. We hope that the programmes set up by the Coordinator for Multilingualism will address the issue of the simultaneous distribution of documents in all the official languages. My delegation would also like to stress that interpretation should be provided in all the official languages at all meetings convened by the United Nations and at meetings of regional groups, so that all delegations have an opportunity to participate effectively and efficiently in the work of the United Nations.

The principle of equal treatment of all official languages in the General Assembly, its committees, subcommittees and other bodies — a statutory principle that has proved its usefulness over time — must be affirmed by the General Assembly. My delegation is therefore pleased to be a sponsor of the draft resolution contained in document A/56/L.44/Rev.1. We look forward to the Secretary-General's report to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly on measures to improve multilingualism at the United Nations, when the Assembly will consider the adoption of a draft resolution to that end.

Mr. Al-Awdi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we should like to make clear that we do not intend to pass judgement on which is the best language in the United Nations. On the contrary, we believe that tolerance and respect make it imperative to admit that all languages are important and have their own beauty, and that they are all worthy of respect. I personally feel pride and delight when I learn phrases and idioms from the languages spoken by my colleagues here at the United Nations.

My delegation would like to reaffirm that the item on multilingualism is one of the most important ones under consideration, as it touches upon the essence of the work of the United Nations in all fields. A quick look at the items recently considered by the General Assembly will make it clear that most bear some relation to the one on multilingualism, in particular those concerning the strengthening of the role of the United Nations system and of the General Assembly and those on a dialogue among civilizations, multiculturalism and respect for the cultural heritage of countries.

Language is the source of knowledge and culture for all societies and civilizations. Proof of this is the fact that one cannot begin to know the customs, traditions and beliefs of any society without first and foremost learning the language of that society, in order to be able to interact with its inhabitants and to become acquainted with its many facets.

My delegation attaches particular importance to the question of the role of the Arabic language in the United Nations. According to resolution 50/11, Arabic is one of the official languages of the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs. We would stress here the need to provide the necessary support to

strengthen the capabilities of the Arabic interpretation and translation services in the Secretariat.

This is a very important matter, as my delegation has noted with regret that, during some formal meetings of certain regional groupings, such as the non-aligned countries and the Asian Group, on occasion no Arabic interpretation was available, and sometimes there was no interpretation at all. This contravenes General Assembly resolution 50/11 and violates and disregards the legitimate rights of the Arab States that are members of those groups, depriving them of an important service and as such, the participation of Arab delegations in such meetings will be less effective.

My delegation hopes that all countries will abide by the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, including the draft resolution that was supposed to be adopted today. We urge them in particular not to hold meetings in the event interpretation is not available or if documents are not available in all official languages.

My delegation has read the report of the Secretary-General on this item. We would like to express our appreciation for the efforts made by Mr. Miles Stoby, Coordinator for Multilingualism and Assistant Secretary-General of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, and his team in dealing with this issue, as well as for their contribution to the preparation of the report under consideration.

My delegation has noted the positive developments that have taken place in the field of language training. The Secretariat must continue to work to develop the language training programme, including in the Arabic language. My delegation notes also that considerable progress has been made in the wide use of official languages in the Department of Public Information and on the Internet. We encourage the Secretariat to ensure that the material provided on the Internet appears in all official languages.

My delegation calls on the Secretariat, and in particular on the Coordinator for Multilingualism, to follow up on the language training programme and on the use of all official languages in all United Nations bodies and those working under its supervision. Let me give as an example the United Nations International School — if this falls within the purview of the work of the Coordinator. The Arabic department there suffers from a severe lack of resources and therefore is not able properly to discharge the task of teaching Arabic to our children. In contrast, other languages enjoy the interest and support of the sponsoring States of those programmes.

We call for the provision of the necessary support for the Arabic-language programme in that school. My delegation believes that our children's right to learn their own language cannot be denied, as this constitutes the pillar of their social and cultural identity whatever that culture or civilization is.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The existence of official and working languages in the United Nations and their status reflects the universal nature of the Organization as well as the cultural diversity of the world community.

The use in the United Nations of various languages, as has been noted on several occasions by the General Assembly, enriches the Organization and thereby contributes to the achievement of the goals set out in the Charter. The States Members of the United Nations regularly reaffirm the need for equality among the working languages in the Organization. Decades of experience have shown that the United Nations has managed to achieve a very good balance between reflecting the world's linguistic diversity as fully as possible and ensuring that the Organization is able to function. This is certainly one of the factors that has contributed to the harmonious integration of new States — of which there are now many more than when the Organization was founded — into the activities of the United Nations.

The principle of equality between official and working languages must be periodically reconfirmed by the General Assembly. All Member States should receive equal treatment as regards the use and quality of all official and working languages. Unfortunately, for the time being, this goal has not been achieved fully. On the basis of the decisions adopted by the General Assembly in 1995, 1997 and 1999, the Russian delegation became one of the co-sponsors of this draft resolution on multilingualism. However, bearing in mind the significance of the draft, we, like the other co-sponsors, are interested in garnering a consensus decision on it, and we hope that this will be achieved in subsequent consultations with the delegations concerned.

Mr. Dangue Réwaka (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): It is always with great concern and considerable

disappointment that the Gabon delegation takes the floor in the debate on multilingualism. It is indeed regrettable to note that, despite the resolutions that have been adopted on a regular basis on this issue, the use of the six official languages and of the two working languages of the Secretariat is no more than a virtual reality. Those languages often appear only in the final phase of the publication of texts, in the form of translations that, regardless of their quality, cannot, for lack of time, allow for high-quality conceptual and intellectual exchanges of views.

Every year, the reports and notes of the Secretary-General and the resolutions and decisions that are adopted lose a little more of their theoretical richness and depth. Having been drafted on the basis of a single language — or almost so — these texts cannot genuinely reflect the nuances or the varied and rich cultural identities of our multifaceted international society. This is indeed a loss to our Organization and represents a most dangerous impoverishment in terms of international cooperation.

If there is any collective right to be enjoyed in this universal house — a right of States and of the men and women working side by side here, as enshrined in international instruments and texts — it is the right to be able to think and to express oneself. Languages are both a means of expressing thought and a vehicle for that thought. They are a source of intellectual enrichment and, without doubt, an irreplaceable tool for communication.

Several statements we have heard this morning raise an issue that transcends today's discussion. That is why the Gabon delegation is of the view that — as was so wisely suggested by the representative of France — we must all work in great concertation on this issue so as to achieve not only a consensus text, but also and above all to find effective solutions to the real problems reflected in draft resolution A/56/L.44/Rev.1. It is indeed through scrupulous compliance with our language obligations that the Secretariat and the Member States will defend the intellectual wealth of this Organization.

Mr. Schumacher (Germany): Germany has supported the efforts of France to work for a resolution on multilingualism. It goes without saying that such a resolution would not require merely the broadest possible support among Member States; no, it would require a consensus. This was the basis on which Germany declared its readiness to co-sponsor the draft resolution.

Those delegations that have taken the floor to comment on the text, objecting to paragraphs relating to the recruitment and promotion of United Nations staff, have made very valid points. They represented important Member States from all regions, whose commitment to the cause of the United Nations has been proven on many occasions. Their opinions cannot be pushed aside.

Human resources management issues are highly sensitive. I commend our Indian colleague for his very thought-provoking speech and share his despair — German is not an official, either, in this house. Thus, I would like to support the very constructive approach of our French colleague to this delicate matter to continue to work towards consensus on the crucial issues "in a spirit of patient dialogue". Further action should be postponed at this point in the debate and we should take note that there is a strong interest in continuing the debate in the Fifth Committee too.

Mr. Raubenheimer (South Africa): My delegation is concerned about the issue of multilingualism, as raised in draft resolution A/56/L.44/Rev.1. This issue is particularly important to us because South Africa is a country with 11 official languages. How we decide on the use of those languages is extremely important to our country.

My delegation is pleased that the sponsors of the draft resolution before us have amended the original draft, which was difficult for us to accept. While the amended draft is a great improvement, my delegation still feels that it is not acceptable. We would have preferred that this issue be discussed more thoroughly before being brought to the General Assembly. We thus appreciate the sponsors' decision to postpone consideration of this item. We look forward to participating in thorough consultations on this very important issue.

We still feel, however, that this is an issue that should have been dealt with outside the General Assembly, perhaps in a meeting of interested Members and the Secretary-General. Otherwise, one cannot avoid the impression that the sponsors are using the power of the General Assembly to micromanage the work of the Secretary-General and the Secretariat.

Mr. Manalo (Philippines): At the outset, I wish to reaffirm my country's firm commitment to promoting multilingualism in the United Nations through the use of all six official United Nations languages in all aspects of our work.

Some paragraphs in the revised draft resolution before us in document A/56/L.44/Rev.1 aim at achieving this and we support them in principle, including those pertaining to interpretation and documentation needs. However, my delegation remains concerned with operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution, which has far-reaching implications for personnel and administrative matters in the United Nations and as a result, we feel, should not be included in a resolution on multilingualism.

We also feel that some paragraphs of the draft might have programme budget implications. Hence, we feel that many of the technical matters covered in those paragraphs, as well as some others, rightly fall within the purview of the Fifth Committee and not of the plenary.

By specifically stating that adequate and confirmed knowledge of a second official language should be taken into account, in addition to other factors affecting promotion, paragraph 4 in effect suggests that knowledge of two official languages is on a par with, if not more decisive than such matters as competence, experience and knowledge of a particular subject when it comes to promotion.

By emphasizing this language requirement, paragraph 4, in our view, goes beyond Article 101 and weakens resolution 2480 B (XXIII), which has also guided the Secretary-General with respect to the promotion of Secretariat staff and personnel. Paragraph 4 also extends this language requirement to other parts of the United Nations system, including funds and programmes.

My delegation continues to believe that Secretariat staff and personnel must be promoted on the basis of merit and competence. The General Assembly should resist micromanaging the Secretariat in this respect by emphasizing particular factors to guide promotion. Furthermore, many staff members of the United Nations are of a mother tongue other than the official languages of the United Nations. Requiring them to have command of two official languages would adversely affect their chances of promotion in both relative and absolute terms. This requirement would also discriminate against, or at least place at a clear disadvantage, those who have not had the good fortune of learning a second official language of the United Nations. This would ultimately have an impact on the cultural diversity and universality of the Organization and possibly affect adversely other agreed goals to which we all subscribe, such as promoting gender balance and increasing the representation of nationals of developing countries in the Secretariat.

Achieving cultural diversity, universality and multilingualism are important goals for which we all strive. However, efforts to promote them should be fair, mutually reinforcing and complementary. One of these goals should not be promoted at the expense of the others. At the same time, although we appreciate the efforts of the sponsors to take into account concerns regarding the recruitment issue, we believe that the new operative paragraph 5 would still require two official languages for recruitment, as it requires knowledge of a second official language in addition to the mother tongue, whether or not the mother tongue is an official language.

In short, it would indeed be regrettable if the cultural diversity, not to mention the efficiency, of the Secretariat and the universality of the Organization were to be sacrificed in the name of multilingualism.

For these reasons, my delegation supports the proposal of the sponsors to defer action on this draft resolution, and we appreciate that proposal. We feel it would allow more time for the general membership to consult and negotiate on the draft resolution with a view to reaching consensus. We thus look forward to participating in the negotiations and consideration of this text at a resumed session.

Mr. Chaudhry (Pakistan): Pakistan supports the principle of multilingualism. We believe that General Assembly resolutions on this question should promote multilingualism, not discrimination on the basis of languages. The importance of this subject, therefore, warrants a consensus resolution.

It is evident from this debate that the draft resolution, as presented, does not yet enjoy consensus. It includes elements that clearly require further deliberations. References have been made to the substantive paragraphs on recruitment and promotion of the staff of the United Nations, which go far beyond the provisions of Article 101 of the Charter. That Article, as the Assembly has heard many delegations

repeat, calls for giving paramount consideration to competence, efficiency and integrity.

The draft resolution actually suggests major changes to the existing criteria for recruitment and promotion. This is tantamount to modifying the agreed aspects of human resources management of the United Nations, which has lately been the subject of extensive deliberations in the Fifth Committee. Paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 need, therefore, to be referred to the Fifth Committee for in-depth discussion as part of the Committee's agenda on human resources management.

Many other paragraphs of the draft resolution also have an impact on the administrative policies of the United Nations and could even have budgetary implications. In order to take an informed decision, it would be useful to ask the Secretariat to let us know the financial implications, if any. Again, this leads us to take up the matter through the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, if needed, as required under rule 153 of the rules of procedure.

Another aspect that I have not heard mentioned in other speeches thus far is that many developing countries spend their precious resources on training their diplomats in one of the six official languages of the United Nations. Imposing the requirement of the second official language for their nationals to enter the United Nations bureaucracy would place an additional burden on them and discriminate against their representation in the Secretariat.

Finally, we agree with those delegations who stated that multilingualism should promote cooperation, not conflict. If this important but sensitive question is not viewed in correct perspective, language can become a source of conflict, as has been happening in our neighbourhoods, east and west.

We greatly appreciate the constructive spirit of the sponsors of this draft resolution to devote more time to building consensus. We welcome this approach and would gladly participate in efforts to forge a consensus on this important issue.

Mr. Lim (Republic of Korea): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to the sponsors of the draft resolution under this agenda item, including France, for the spirit of compromise that allows the postponement of action on the draft resolution. We were sincerely touched by the statements of the Ambassador of France assuring us that the sponsors are very mindful of the concerns of countries whose mother tongues are not one of the six official languages.

Indeed, the agenda item before us, "Multilingualism", is of paramount significance to all Member States. We are very much convinced that such an important draft resolution should not be adopted in a hasty manner and, more importantly, should not be adopted by voting. Therefore, my delegation is more than happy to witness the deferment of action on the draft resolution.

Let me now share our views on the promotion of multilingualism. It is our understanding that multilingualism should be based on respect for cultural diversity, as well as for all the indigenous languages of various peoples. We strongly support this noble cause and fully understand the merits of multilingualism in the context of the United Nations, which is an international body with a universal character.

As mentioned in General Assembly resolution 50/11, multilingualism is to be construed as a corollary to the universality of the United Nations, which implies that it not only must be sought among the six official languages but also should be fully extended to other, non-official languages. Multilingualism could be a tool for encouraging mutual understanding and harmony among peoples and countries, and should in no way serve as a basis for pitting some groups of people against others.

However, we do not believe that the draft resolution before us, as it stands, would foster multilingualism in the genuine sense of the word. It seems to us that this draft resolution is much more about promoting the second official language in the United Nations system.

In addition, it is our firm view that the promotion of United Nations staff should be pursued in accordance with the provisions of Article 101 of the United Nations Charter, which puts emphasis on efficiency, competence and integrity, as well as the need to pay due regard to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible.

Having said that, we believe that the draft resolution undo consideration goes against the letter and spirit of that Charter provision. In this context, it is our view that the idea of making knowledge of a

second official language a criterion for the recruitment and promotion of United Nations staff is biased against those countries whose mother tongue is not one of the six official languages. Under the current system, those who have a command of more than one of the six official languages already enjoy the benefits of administrative and financial incentives, in terms of promotion and language allowances.

In the light of these factors, my delegation has strong reservations regarding paragraph 4 of the draft resolution, which counts knowledge of a second official language as a criterion in the promotion of United Nations staff. That paragraph goes against what it is intended to achieve, by discriminating against those whose mother tongue is not one of the six official languages.

While we appreciate the fact that the sponsors of the draft resolution, including France, have made an effort to reach consensus on the text of the draft, my delegation regrets that the text as currently drafted does not duly reflect the concerns raised by many delegations, including mine, in the process of seeking consensus. Even worse, the draft resolution goes beyond the earlier resolution 50/11 by extending the scope of its application from the Secretariat to other agencies of the United Nations system. If the draft resolution were put to the vote, therefore, we would cast a negative vote.

Let me conclude by once again expressing our appreciation to the sponsors for their thoughtful decision to defer action on the draft resolution until next year. My delegation looks forward to making a constructive contribution to the discussion on the draft resolution.

Mr. Yahaya (Malaysia): My delegation wishes to associate itself with the views expressed by earlier speakers regarding their concerns with regard to the thrust of the draft resolution contained in A/56/L.44/Rev.1. Let me emphasize that Malaysia is not opposed to the promotion of multilingualism at the United Nations. Malaysia supports the promotion of multilingualism — for instance, in the implementation of the rule regarding the simultaneous distribution of documents in all official languages. Indeed, my delegation believes that multilingualism will promote the culture of dialogue among civilizations, which we have all endorsed.

Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that we have come to this crossroads once again. During the fiftieth session of the General Assembly in 1995, my delegation, with regret, abstained in the voting on resolution 50/11, as it was injurious to countries whose native tongue is not one of the six official languages of the United Nations. The fact that 64 countries either voted against or abstained on resolution 50/11 demonstrates that there was serious and genuine concern on the part of the general membership with regard to the thrust of that resolution.

It is the view of my delegation that the thrust of paragraphs 4 and 5 of A/56/L.44/Rev.1, as currently drafted, goes beyond the provisions of resolution 50/11 and would further penalize countries whose mother tongue is not one of the official languages of the Organization. My delegation stresses that, in the employment of staff, the Secretary-General is requested to base his consideration on Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations.

If the draft resolution were adopted, paragraph 4 would also expand the scope of its application to the funds and programmes of the United Nations. That would constitute a substantial change. Such a change, together with those resulting from the provisions of paragraph 5, should be considered in the Fifth Committee. As a matter of principle, it is the position of my delegation that administrative matters, including recruitment and promotion, should be allocated to the technical Committee, especially given the fact that only last year the Assembly adopted resolution 55/258 without a vote. In addition, the genesis of this discussion was resolution 2480 B (XXIII), which was initiated in the Fifth Committee.

Cultural diversity is one of the characteristics of our Organization. It is most regrettable that in the context of this agenda item, the sponsors failed to take this into account. We believe that such cultural diversity is particularly pertinent and crucial this year, as we commemorate the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We are pleased that the sponsors have agreed to defer action on the draft resolution, as contained in document A/56/L.44/Rev.1, to allow more time for discussion with a view to achieving a consensus text.

Mr. Thapa (Nepal): Multilingualism is a principle that deserves to be promoted. In providing for six official languages, the United Nations had that

objective in mind. We certainly believe in that principle. In our opinion, however, paragraph 4 of the draft resolution as contained in document A/56/L.44/Rev.1 and introduced by the representative of France, seeks to undermine the principles enshrined in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the United Nations charter. By emphasizing adequate and confirmed knowledge of a second official knowledge in the recruitment and promotion of United Nations personnel, the draft resolution in its present form would discriminate against many nationals of States Members of the United Nations — including those of my own country — whose mother tongue is not among the six official languages of the United Nations.

My delegation was happy to learn that the sponsors of the draft resolution have agreed to postpone action on it, allowing more time for all of us to try to formulate a consensus text. We would welcome any opportunity to be a part of the negotiating progress so as address the genuine concerns of delegations in the interests of reaching consensus. Had this draft resolution, in its present form, been pressed for action today, my delegation would have been constrained to oppose it.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

At the request of the sponsors of draft resolution A/56/L.44/Rev.1, action on the draft resolution is postponed.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that, with regard to the programme of work for this afternoon, the letter from the Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya before the Assembly under agenda items 59 and 60 has been issued as document A/56/704, and is available at the document distribution counters in the Hall.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.